



Roast Duck Recipe



Detailed recipe with step-by-step photos on how to roast a whole duck in the oven. This Roast Duck has juicy meat, crispy skin, and it's glazed with the honey-balsamic glaze to give the duck a beautiful roasted look. Perfect main dish for any special occasion, especially holidays, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Eve!

Course	Main Course
Cuisine	American
Prep Time	20 minutes
Cook Time	3 hours
Total Time	3 hours 20 minutes
Servings	6 people
Calories	2862kcal
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Ingredients

Roast Duck

- 6 lb whole Pekin duck
- salt
- 5 garlic cloves chopped
- 1 lemon small or medium, chopped

Glaze

- ½ cup balsamic vinegar
- 1 lemon , freshly squeezed juice
- ¼ cup honey

Instructions

HOW TO THAW FROZEN DUCK

1. If you purchased a frozen duck, make sure it's completely defrosted in the refrigerator for a couple of days. Then remove it from the refrigerator about 30 minutes before cooking to bring it closer to room temperature.

PREHEAT THE OVEN TO 350 °F (175 °C)

1. Pre-heat the oven to 350 °F (175 °C). Prepare a large roasting pan with a rack so the duck is elevated and fat can drip beneath.

PREPARE THE DUCK

1. Remove the giblets from the duck cavity (if present). Rinse the duck inside and out with cold water; pat thoroughly dry with paper towels.
2. Set the duck on the working surface. Score the duck's skin on the breast in a diamond pattern, ensuring you only cut the skin, without reaching the meat. Poke the other fatty parts of the duck with the tip of the knife all over, to ensure fat release, especially in very fatty parts. You don't need to poke the duck legs as the skin is pretty thin there (except where the duck legs connect to the duck body). Season generously with salt inside the cavity and all over the skin, legs and exterior. Place the duck breast side up.

(refer to step-by-step photos on scoring duck's skin above this recipe card - please scroll up).

3. Place the chopped garlic cloves and lemon slices inside the duck cavity (these are just for flavor, not for eating - you will discard them after cooking). The duck will have flapping skin on both ends - fold that skin inwards, to hold the garlic and lemon inside. Tie up the duck legs with butcher's twine (or aluminum foil if twine is unavailable).

(again, refer to the step-by-step photos above).

GENERAL GUIDELINES on roasting the whole duck safely in the oven

1. Before you go ahead with the recipe, please review these general guidelines.
2. **According to USDA, to safely cook the duck in the oven at 350 Fahrenheit you have to cook it for 30 minutes per pound, which equals 3 hours for a 6-pound duck.** Of course, one should use a meat thermometer and cook the duck to one's preference (medium-rare, for example), but at your own risk. :) Here is the link for the [USDA's safe cooking guidelines for whole ducks](#).
3. The duck is considered safe to eat (according to USDA) when an internal temperature reaches 165 °F using a meat thermometer. That's when it's well done. **If you take the duck out of the oven once the internal temperature is 155 F and let it sit for 10-15 minutes on the counter until it reaches 165 F - the duck will be well-done, delicious, and safe to eat.** Check the internal temperature in the thigh's and wing's innermost part and the breast's thickest part.
4. If you prefer to cook your duck rare or medium-rare, the internal temperature (as measured by a meat thermometer) at which you take it out of the oven is 130 Fahrenheit. For medium, take it out at 140 Fahrenheit. But it could be not

safe to eat (according to USDA). Do so at your own risk. :) The USDA recommends roasting the duck for 30 minutes per pound at 350 F to be safe.

RECIPE OVERVIEW

1. With these considerations in mind, here is the recipe for a duck cooked to a final internal temperature of 165°F (well-done, juicy, and not overcooked). Always use an internal thermometer to guide the process. As a general rule, whole ducks roast at about 30 minutes per pound at 350°F (175°C), and you can adjust all cooking times proportionally if you prefer your duck medium (140°F) or medium-rare (130°F).

HOW TO ROAST THE DUCK IN THE OVEN

1. **Step 1. Roast for 40 minutes.** Place the duck breast-side up on the prepared rack in the roasting pan. Roast uncovered at 350 °F (175 °C) for 40 minutes.
2. **Step 2. Roast for 20 minutes (or up to 40 minutes).** Flip the duck so it's breast-side down, and continue roasting uncovered at 350 °F (175 °C) for 20 minutes. After 20 minutes of roasting, check the duck's internal temperature with an instant meat thermometer. If the temperature reaches 140 F, proceed to the next step. If the meat temperature is below 140 F, roast the duck for 10 or 20 more minutes or until the temperature reaches 140 F.
3. **Step 3. Remove duck fat.** You now have roasted the duck for 1 hour (or 1 hour 20 minutes total). Remove the roasting pan with the duck from the oven, careful not to spill the juices (fat) in the roasting pan. Transfer the duck to a platter, and carefully pour off the rendered duck fat from the roasting pan into a heat-proof container (you can save this fat for roasting vegetables later). Make sure the lemons and garlic from the cavity do not fall out - keep the skin on both ends of the duck folded.
4. **Step 4. Make a honey-balsamic glaze and roast for 20 minutes, brushing the duck with the glaze.** In a small bowl, combine ½ cup balsamic vinegar + the juice of 1 lemon + ¼ cup honey. Place the duck breast-side up again on the rack in the roasting pan. Brush all over the duck (especially the scored breast) with the balsamic mixture. Return it to the oven at 350 °F (175 °C) and roast for 20 minutes, brushing every 10 minutes with the glaze.
5. **Step 5. Roast for 20 minutes and continue brushing the duck with the glaze.** If the glaze seems thin, add more honey (it should be relatively thick). Then roast the duck another 20 minutes at 350 °F (175 °C), brushing every 5 minutes with the honey-balsamic glaze.
6. **Step 6. Broil the duck (optional and if needed).** You can carefully broil the duck for about 5 or 10 minutes (check it regularly to ensure it doesn't char too much). Broiling the duck is a great option if the skin is not crispy enough. It

will speed up the caramelization of the skin if your duck is already cooked to a desired internal temperature (as measured by a meat thermometer).

- 7. Step 7. Remove the duck from the oven.** Remove the duck from the oven once the internal temperature reaches ~155 °F (68 °C) (for well-done finished to 165 °F). Let it rest, uncovered, on the kitchen counter for ~15 minutes — during this time the internal temperature will carry over to the final target of 165 °F.
- 8. Step 8. Discard the lemon.** Then, carefully remove and discard the lemon from the cavity (being careful not to get burned). Carve the duck and serve!

Notes

- **This recipe is written for a 6-lb duck;** if your duck is significantly smaller or larger, adjust the time proportionally. As a general rule, a whole duck needs about 30 minutes of roasting time per pound when cooked at 350°F (175°C).
- **Using a meat thermometer is essential** — times are estimates; internal temperature is your reliable guide.
- **If you prefer medium rather than well-done,** adjust the cooking times — but be aware the USDA considers 165 °F (74 °C) the safe minimum for poultry.

Why is the calorie amount in the Nutrition Section so huge?

The huge calories (about 3,000 calories per serving) you see on the nutrition label (the nutrition info on my site is approximate anyway!) include a large amount of duck fat rendered when you roast the duck. You will not eat this fat with the duck (it's rendered and then removed from the roasting pan). But you can save it and use some of it to roast the potatoes or eggs for the next several days.

Duck's weight matters!

Ducks come in different sizes. The recipe, as written, is for a 6-pound duck. If your duck is half that size (3 pounds), adjust cooking times accordingly (in half). Use a meat thermometer as your guidance.

Looking for Thanksgiving side dishes to serve with duck?

I have created a comprehensive recipe collection of [60 Thanksgiving side dishes](#) conveniently **categorized by ingredient**: Green Beans, Butternut Squash, Sweet Potatoes, Brussels Sprouts, Potatoes, Acorn Squash, Spaghetti Squash, Asparagus, Broccoli, etc. It's a great resource to browse through for a last moment holiday inspiration! This side dishes will also work great for Christmas and New Year's Eve.

Looking for a complete Thanksgiving menu?

Be sure to check out my [50 Best Thanksgiving Recipes \(The Complete Holiday Menu\)](#) - it includes everything: Fall-inspired **holiday appetizers, side dishes, salads, main courses, pasta recipes, desserts, and even breakfast**. This holiday

menu features **proven, tried, and true Thanksgiving dishes** that have been reader favorites for years (I've been publishing recipes since 2012).

↓ ↓ My most popular Thanksgiving side dishes, salads, and desserts are below. They will pair beautifully with the roast duck. I highly recommend you check them out. ↓ ↓

Updated recipe

I originally posted this recipe on October 24, 2015. I updated this recipe on October 28, 2023, and again on November 16, 2025, to make it more complete and helpful. Let me know in the comments what you think of the updates - or if you miss the old version (which I can repost).

This recipe can be found on my food blog: <https://juliasalbum.com/>

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<https://juliasalbum.com/how-to-cook-duck/>

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